Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
concerning the electronic Official Personnel Folder (OPF) contents

If you have questions concerning access to your OPF, click here.

1. Why is the OPF divided like it is?

The electronic OPF is divided in the same manner it was when it was a paper file. It was deemed that it would be easier for officers to make the transition if it retained those characteristics. The only addition to the file is the Promotion/Confidential file which used to be a separate folder placed inside the OPF.

The five sections are as follows:

> A. Blue Section - This section contains your Commissioned Officer Efficiency Reports, Exceptional Capability (EC) promotion documentation and letters of Reprimand.
> B. Green Section - This section contains documentation used by the boards to review for promotion, assimilation or other actions. It contains the CV, licenses and credentials (if applicable), awards, continuing education and support documentation. It is to this section that most of the documents the officer submits will be placed.
> C. Yellow Section - This section contains administrative documentation such as dependents' birth certificates, marriage certificate, insurance designations, statements of service (for prior periods of PHS Commissioned Corps service) and Montgomery Bill/GI documents.
> D. Pink Section - This section contains Personnel Orders and supporting documentation, application materials and security clearance materials.
> E. Beige Section - This section contains documentation of promotion and assimilation boards.

2. How can I get a password if I lose or forget it?

You need to contact the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) Help Desk at (301) 594–0961 or e-mail the Help Desk at cchelpdesk@psc.gov. You will need to leave your name, your phone number and your PHS serial number, if you do not get one of the staff members.

3. How do I submit documentation to my file?

The preferred method for all documentation is to fax in the information to either (301) 480-1436 or (301) 480-1407. A hard copy can also be sent; however, do not submit a hard copy if you have already submitted a fax copy. Do not submit any electronic files to the OPF system or to the PHSOPFFIX address. At the present time, they cannot be accepted. Please check questions #18 and 19 to determine if the documentation should be submitted to the OPF.

Commissioned Officer Efficiency Reports (COERs) must be submitted to your supervisor and sent through the proper review chain before it is sent to your file. Any rebuttals to the COER are to be sent through the same chain.
Licenses and credentials should be faxed to the licensure technician at (240) 453-6142. Please

separate all of these documents. Do not copy them all onto one sheet.

Long-term training forms and documentation should be sent to Betsy Darracott at 1101 Wooton Parkway, Plaza Level, Suite 100, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

Forms that need to be submitted to other branches and departments should still be submitted to those branches and departments. If they belong on the OPF, they will be forwarded to the folder.

Please include your name and (Public Health Service) PHS serial number on the upper right-hand corner of all sheets. The faxed documents enter an electronic workflow (no paper copies are produced). Thus the resulting images are only as good as the fax machine you use to submit the documents (streaks, crooked pages, etc. originate from your machine). Documents with various shades of contrast, highlighter marking, etc., do not fax well and cannot be read. Officers submitting Curriculum Vitaes (CV's) should note that if a summary page (informative cover sheet) is used, it must be included as Page 1 of the CV as only one document is retained for inclusion in the officer's OPF. OCCO will not accept publication reprints and program agendas for inclusion in the OPF. This information is more effectively documented through the CV. Contact your Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) for recommended CV formats.

4. If I fax in a document, how long will it take to get into my file?

The amount of time will vary in accordance to the time of year and can vary from a couple of days to a few weeks. When the promotion cycle starts, many people send in great amounts of documentation, which slows the process. During peak times (December and January), please allow 2 to 4 weeks. Also, if you do not include your PHS serial number and name on each document, the document may take longer to index while a search is made to match the document with the officer.

If you are involved in the promotion cycle, all of your documentation **must** *be submitted by December 31 of the prior year to insure inclusion in your OPF when the boards meet.*

5. Something is wrong with my file. How can I get it fixed?

If documentation in your file is incorrectly indexed or if there is documentation that does not belong in your folder, you need to contact phsopffix@hhs.gov to either have the document corrected or to find out why it appears as it does.

6. If I send a correction to be done to OPFFIX, how long will it take to be completed?

It depends on the nature of the correction. Date corrections are easily done. Other corrections may require retrieval of the original document and checking or rescanning it. These corrections take more time. Please be patient if a correction seems to be taking too long.

7. How do I get my PIR corrected?

If you do not agree with the information reflected in the PIR, you must write OCCO (ATTN: PIR Coordinator, 1101 Wooton Parkway, Plaza Level, Suite 100, Rockville, MD 20852) to request that the record be reviewed and modified. A request must be supported by accompanying documentation (e.g. copy of personnel orders, award certificates).

8. How were the dates chosen for my documentation?

The dates chosen are the ones that were determined to help the individuals who administrate the file.

To determine the dates your documents should reflect, please click here.

9. When I look at my folder, the document is so small. How can I make it bigger?

Use the symbol of the magnifying glass with the plus sign. It will magnify the image. You can then use the toggle bars either on the bottom or the side to move the magnified image to the area you wish to view. If you wish to make it smaller, use the magnifying symbol with the minus sign. You can also use the "Zoom" feature in the tool bar above the symbols.

10. The document on my file is sideways. How can I put it upright so I can read it?

There are two buttons on the tool bar that have bi-colored squares (one button has red squares, the other has green). The red squared button turns the document to the left 90 degrees and the green one turns it to the right 90 degrees. Press the button of your choice until the image is upright. You can also use the "Page" feature in the tool bar above the symbols.

The pages appear in the internet version of your electronic OPF the way they were scanned or faxed into the system (i.e. if faxed upside down, it will appear upside down). However, the document is flipped by the OCCO staff when indexed; its orientation is noted so that the board members will see an upright document. Unfortunately, the internet software does not recognize these settings.

11. Why do I have a "Letter of Reprimand" index if I don't have a letter of reprimand?

The sections of the folders are fixed fields in your file. As long as there is no information contained in these fields, you can be assured that you do not have a reprimand on your file.

12. My military awards are not on file. How can I get authorization to wear them?

You will need to fax documentation for military awards to the awards coordinator at (240) 453-6134. Not all military awards are authorized for wear with the PHS uniform, so do not expect that all awards will be accepted.

13. I am missing awards documentation for a PHS award. How can I get the award on my file?

If you have a PHS award that does not appear on your file, you will also need to check your PIR to see if it is has been authorized. Fax a copy of the award certificate to the Awards Coordinator at (240) 453-6134 with a note indicating that the award is missing from your OPF and/or PIR.

14. Why are all my continuing education documents and support documentation dated as 12/31/year?

In order for all of your continuing education and support documents to remain in place for the entirety of the promotion cycle, that date is entered for that documentation. The promotion/assimilation boards determined that they needed 7 years' worth of these documents to make a proper assessment of the officer. After 7 years time, these documents are not viewed by the boards.

15. The date on the birth certificate section is not mine. Why?

The birth certificate section is for your dependents. The birth date is the date of the first birth certificate on your file (or, if it is illegible, the first clear certificate). If you were born overseas, your birth certificate should be behind your application as proof of your citizenship. If you were born in the U.S., a birth certificate is unnecessary. A copy of your dependent's passport will serve only if a copy of the original birth certificate for the dependent has not been submitted.

16. Does the promotion/assimilation board see all of my file?

No, the board only sees the blue, green and pink sections of your folder. The other 2 sections (yellow and beige) have been deemed as non-essential or inappropriate to the promotion process.

17. I have a special skill. How do I get it documented?

The Special Skills section of the folder is for those skills not health-related that may be useful in times of emergency, such as scuba diving or piloting. These skills are not necessary for your duties as a commissioned corps officer. The only documentation accepted for this section are licenses or certificates showing that you are certified in these skills. A listing of skills is not acceptable for this section, but can be placed within your CV when you update it.

18. What is appropriate documentation for my file?

Please click here for appropriate documentation table.

19. What is *not* appropriate documentation for my file?

Please click here for inappropriate documentation table.

20. What happened to my old military file?

Any part of your military record that was not used by OCCO should be in the packet of

documents returned to you when your file was processed for conversion to the electronic format. OCCO uses those documents needed to calculate your time, pay rate and DIEMS date (and Home of Record for all inter-service transfers). Any other documentation should have been returned to you. The only exception is the inclusion of OERs for all officers coming to OCCO after 5/17/2001.

21. What happens to documentation that I send that is rejected?

It is destroyed. Since the documentation we culled from your folder has been returned to you, it is assumed that any further documentation has been sent in error.

22. Why are my agency and outside awards not appearing in the awards section?

It has been determined that for the purposes of your file, "awards" are only your PHS service awards or prior military awards you wear on your uniform. Prior military and authorized awards from other bodies are considered "Non-PHS" awards. All other "awards" are placed in your PHSSUPPORT documents.